

Putting physiotherapy at the heart of managing workplace sickness absence

Returning to work quickly...

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) are now the biggest single cause of lost time from work, and certain forms of MSD such as low back pain can be quite complex, if these are not dealt with quickly and efficiently it can lead to further complications and long-term sickness absence.

A Health & Safety Executive report concluded that one million people in the UK are affected by MSD resulting in 11.6 million working days lost. With patients needing NHS physiotherapy waiting up an average of 14.2 weeks, and in some cases significantly longer, the current squeeze on NHS budgets could mean employers whose employees are waiting for assessment or treatment are paying the price.

Keeping critical services running: North East Ambulance Service

Looking after employee wellbeing and productivity is important in any industry, but for some service providers, getting people fit and well and back to work is critical to the provision of vital public services. MSD are an occupational hazard for British ambulance staff due to the amount of lifting involved with the job. With MSD being one of the main causes of work-related absence, North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) were keen to minimise their impact on the service.

Physio Med provided NEAS with timely access to its managed network of senior chartered physiotherapists, ensuring the majority of the referred employees received an appointment within just 24 hours and, in just seven months, NEAS saw a significant reduction in long-term sickness absence due to MSD, saving hundreds of lost working days.

Elma Alexander, Head of Human Resources at NEAS, said: "Our operational staff do a very physically demanding job and as a

result we have a high level of reported musculoskeletal injuries causing staff to be absent from work.

"The demand meant that employees were waiting for up to three weeks for an appointment with our in-house physiotherapist, which clearly impacted on our service. Working with Physio Med gave our employees much faster access to physiotherapy treatment, which in turn has seen us vastly improve our levels of long-term sickness absence."

Delivering fast results for Dairy Crest

Dairy Crest has 16 manufacturing sites and 120 milk depots in the UK and employs 6,000 staff in a wide range of manual handling roles, from those on the production line to milkmen lifting and carrying. As a result, MSD were a major cause of workplace absence and the organisation needed to find a way to support its employees in accessing quality physiotherapy treatment much more quickly.

Marwin Clarke, the Occupational Health Manager at Dairy Crest, said: "Due to the nature of our business the jobs vary greatly and so we have a whole range of manual handling roles where employees can sustain injuries or conditions. It is vital that our staff can access quality care as quickly as possible to help them return to work quickly and safely, to prevent the need for long-term absence

"The advantage of working with Physio Med is that we can refer instantly, rather than waiting for an NHS referral, and employees are seen within days."

Physio Med supported Dairy Crest's managers by regularly providing management information, leveraging its extensive experience of the type of business-relevant information clients

may require to produce tailored and comprehensive reports.

Key facts

- Employees who sustain MSD injuries will wait an average of 14.2 weeks for treatment on the NHS, as many as 20 weeks in some cases;
- Delaying assessment and treatment by a physiotherapist causes acute injuries to become chronic;
- Physiotherapy is both clinically effective and cost effective. Physiotherapists are ideally placed to keep employees healthy and fit to work.

About Physio Med

From its head office in Leeds, West Yorkshire, Physio Med provides cost efficient, quality, clinically robust and tailored treatment programmes, all delivered by chartered physiotherapists – either in-house or via its managed network of more than 750 handpicked private physiotherapy practices across the UK.

For a free consultation and an assessment of how Physio Med could reduce the time taken by your staff to return to work, contact +44 (0)113 229 1300 or email customerservices@physiomed.co.uk, alternatively visit our website www.physiomed.co.uk.



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